



# MEDIA IMPACT REPORT

October Events Recap: Advertising Week NY & CLUB Women's Sports

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*Also in this issue:*

Are All Media Incentive Programs Bad?





## /BRIEFING ROOM

# October Events Recap

By **Robin Cohen**, Executive Vice President, Integrated Media Investment + Planning  
& **Susan Boland**, Vice President of Communications Strategy

The week of October 7 was packed with wall-to-wall conferences and events from coast to coast, including Advertising Week NY, CLUB Women's Sports, Google's Think Lead Gen, and PDMI West to name a few. Our agency had teams on the ground at each event, and the following provides some high-level takeaways from Advertising Week and CLUB Women's Sports specifically.

## Monetizing Retail Networks

The "Unlocking Omnichannel Success: Full Funnel Strategies for Retail" panel at Advertising Week discussed breaking down silos between brand and shopper teams to create a unified approach that meets consumers where they are in their shopping journey. With platforms like Pinterest leading the way for Gen Z shoppers—who utilize the app for everything from holiday planning to gift-giving—it's essential to implement a cohesive strategy that capitalizes on the overwhelming volume of shoppable content. Retail media networks, such as Target's Roundel, enhance the shopping experience by combining on-site and off-site media to broaden brand reach, supported by closed-loop measurement for evaluating the impact of combined media efforts. This integrated strategy

can significantly boost returns, evidenced by a 1.5x return on ad spend (ROAS) when on-and off-platform contributions are analyzed together.



## Women's Sports in the Spotlight

Advertising Week hosted several panels on the topic of sports, with women's sports continuing to be front and center. During the "What's the Score" panel, hosted by VAB, the focus was on how to measure and

reach audiences with the continued fragmentation of consumption. Panelists discussed how “sports sponsorship measurement may be emerging from the dark ages,” but how improvements can still be made.

Rain the Growth Agency’s EVP of Integrated Media Investment + Planning Robin Cohen spoke to the need for an ongoing test and learn approach, and to lean into controlled experiments to measure outcomes. The panel also discussed the significant growth in consumption and attendance of women’s sports in the past year, from WNBA, NCAA basketball, gymnastics, volleyball and more. Brands still have a huge opportunity in women’s sports and should be considering how to maximize the opportunities across sports and platforms.

This takeaway was echoed during the CLUB Women’s Sports event hosted by Sports Innovation Lab. Rain the Growth Agency’s Chief Client Officer Sue Collins discussed the scope and size of the new media rights deals. This includes the \$2.2 billion deal with the WNBA, and how that’s bringing women’s sports into prime time on a consistent basis. Collins also referenced the success that Rain the Growth Agency clients are seeing in women’s sports as they continue to test into opportunities through the agency’s HypeHer practice. The ROI is there, and there are still opportunities available to test at lower budgets available to advertisers who want to gain learnings.



## The “Why” in AI

Many panels such as “IV.AI—There’s Not One AI Button—But Many Companies are Succeeding,” discussed the impacts of AI technology at Advertising Week. This session, in particular, focused on instant video generation, highlighting both its transformative potential as well as complexities, particularly when that creation demands high levels of personalization. Companies are increasingly utilizing templates to streamline the process while resolving anomalies with advanced technologies (e.g., avatars and eye correction).

The key to success is understanding the why: Why are you using AI? What are you looking to solve for? Companies may report impressive outcomes like a 40% increase in accuracy, although the benchmark for this metric remains critical for context (i.e., 40% in relation to what?) As natural language processing evolves, its role in customer service is becoming a baseline expectation, leading to universal investment in AI solutions across brands; this necessitates the establishment of guardrails to ensure ethical and effective implementations in customer interactions.





## /NOTEPAD

# Are All Media Incentive Programs Bad?

By **David Nyurenberg**, *Digital Video Product & Innovation Director*,  
& **Stasia Fulginiti**, *Director, Paid Search*

The digital media landscape today presents agencies with a complex and sometimes conflicting set of incentives. On one hand, agencies are tasked with maximizing the effectiveness of their clients' advertising investments. On the other hand, vendors and publishers are navigating tighter margins as they strive to maximize revenue and grow shareholder profits amidst challenging economic conditions and market realities.

Vendor incentive programs, which often include rebates, discounted rates, or exclusive access to premium inventory, have become increasingly common as vendors seek to lock in higher spend commitments from agencies. While these programs can raise concerns about bias in decision-making, they also present potential benefits for clients when handled transparently and ethically.

## Collaboration is Key

The recent antitrust lawsuit against Google highlighted how vendor incentive programs can lead to misalignment between the interests of agencies, clients, and media partners. In this case, agencies committed to certain spending levels on a platform in exchange for cash rebates, raising concerns about whether these incentives drove decisions that were in the best interest of clients.

However, if managed transparently with client goals in-mind, incentive programs can offer substantial benefits. These can include access to lower rates, early product offerings, and valuable add-ons such as comprehensive measurement studies. When agencies work closely with their clients and media partners, aligning incentives with client objectives, these programs can enhance a media strategy rather than detract from it.

## Valuing Relationships

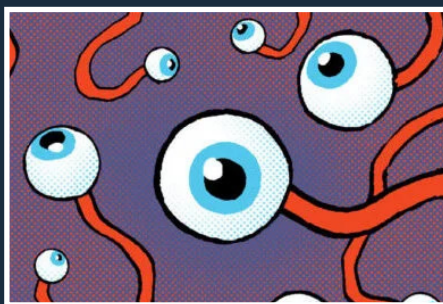
In the current marketplace, media incentive programs are likely to continue as vendors and publishers seek to navigate economic pressures. At Rain the Growth Agency, we approach these deals differently. Any rebates or cost-savings received are always passed directly back to our clients, allowing them to reinvest those savings into campaign optimization or other strategic initiatives.

Our established partnerships with key media platforms often unlock not only advantageous rates but also early access to new product features, valuable measurement tools and enhanced levels of account service. By negotiating on behalf of our clients, we ensure that any incentives serve to complement their media strategies and drive better performance.

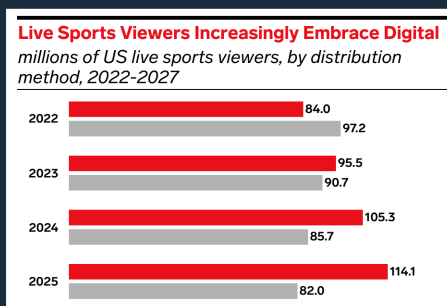
We advocate for full client participation in these discussions, ensuring transparency and a clear understanding of how incentives align with their business objectives. This collaborative approach ensures that any vendor incentives are strategically beneficial for all parties involved, fostering trust and long-term success.

While media incentive programs can raise valid concerns, they are not inherently bad. With the right level of transparency and alignment, they can offer significant value to clients, unlocking opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable.

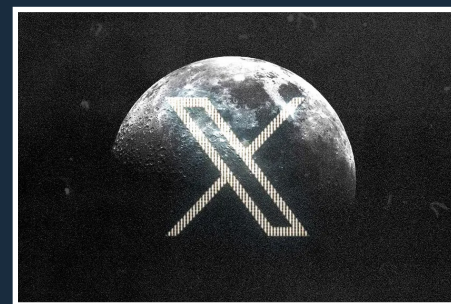
## /QUICK HITS



Buyers Can Now Target  
High-Attention Inventory  
In The Trade Desk  
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Live Sports Viewers Increasingly  
Embrace Digital  
[\[EMARKETER\]](#)



Two Years Post acquisition,  
And X's Relationship With  
Advertisers Has Never Been  
More Complex  
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## Need More Guidance?



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